

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph [0017] with the following amended paragraph:

[0017] Returning to Figure 2, on the second, top end 112 of the shaft 102, there is attached a gas outlet nozzle 114. The top end 112 of the shaft 102 extends into the molten metal bath through an opening 116, which extends through the base 104 and refractory material 105. A support 118 having a central bore 120 is provided in the opening 116 in the base 104. The shaft 102 extends through the central bore 120 of the support 118, with the central bore 120 being dimensioned to allow free rotation of the shaft 102. The support 118 includes a generally conical upper portion 122, which includes an annular shoulder 124 that bears against a portion the inner surface 126 of the base 104 **or insulating material 105**, such portion being adjacent to the opening 116. The support 118 also includes a generally cylindrical body 117, through which extends the bore 120, the body 117 preferably extending through the opening 116. The outer diameter of the body 117 is preferably dimensioned to provide a snug fit within the opening 116. As indicated above, the upper portion ~~420~~ **122** of the support 118 has a generally conical structure. Such structure aids in directing molten metal away from the shaft 102. Although the support 118 and the opening 116 are described in terms of preferred structural configurations, it will be understood by persons skilled in the art that various other geometries are possible within the scope of the present invention as described herein. It will also be understood that the support 118 is preferably made from a material that is capable of withstanding the temperature of the molten metal. For example, suitable materials include alumina silicate, graphite or ceramics.